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ADDRESS OF
HON. GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS

AT PHILADELPHIA, SEPT. 30, 1864.

GENTLEMEN OF PHILADELPHIA:—

Some of you have done me the great honor to invite me to deliver an address here on the present state of the country, and the issues involved in the approaching presidential election. The nomination of General McClellan to the presidency by the Democratic party, affords to me an ample reason for complying with your invitation. For many long and weary months it has been my constant hope that the American people would come at length to appreciate and sympathize with his character, and would perceive how his public principles are identified with the welfare of the country and the safety of its institutions. There is a reasonable prospect that such a condition of the public mind respecting this distinguished man will be reached; reached in spite of malignant detraction, in spite of official oppression and persecution, without the slightest sacrifice of his personal dignity, without a shadow of change on his part, and through the simple power of a true and upright character to vindicate itself. My estimate of him is not, so

far as I can perceive, the mere result of personal regard, or of narrow habits of observation. Having known and lived with persons of marked character all my life, I do not see any sufficient reason for mistrusting my own judgment in this particular instance, and I do not imagine that anybody can suggest any good reason why I should not publicly express it.

It is now eighteen years, or more, since I first met General McClellan, for a single evening, in a domestic circle in New England, where he had come to attend the marriage of one of his kindred. He was then a young lieutenant in the army, recently graduated from West Point; alert, full of intelligence, and impressing all whom he met by a remarkable combination of spirit and modesty. But from that time I had not particularly observed him, until my attention was suddenly arrested by a very striking opinion and prediction concerning him, uttered by a veteran officer of the army, of high rank and great experience, who has been long retired, but who had followed the career of McClellan, as he

has the careers of all the men who have been educated at West Point for the last forty years, with the closest observation. This gentleman, whose authority in all military affairs stands very high, was asked by a friend, in the summer of 1861, at the time when it began to be rumored that General Scott, from his increasing bodily infirmity, might be obliged to retire, who there was that would be fit to take General Scott's place? He answered immediately, "General McClellan, who is now fighting his way through Western Virginia. If *he* is put at the head of the army, the government and the country will be safe."

From that period until General McClellan was removed from all active service, for no assignable or creditable reason, I followed his course with the strongest interest, and when he came to the city of New York to reside, in the early part of the winter of 1862-3, I sought to renew our acquaintance, and have since been honored by his friendship. The opinions, therefore, which I have formed concerning him, are not founded solely upon observation of his public acts or writings; although there is but little need to put forward the judgments of private intercourse. General McClellan's qualities as a man and a statesman stand before the world upon tests which all intelligent persons can apply. His accomplishments as a soldier are by no means the limit of his powers. A broad, capacious, and cultivated intellect, well instructed in the principles and history of our institutions; a great faculty for calm and wise thinking; a solid judgment; a power of self-control that has been tried by greater and worse provocations than even Washington was subjected to, and that has proved as strong as Washington's; a sagacity in perceiving the characters of men, which will insure him, I confidently predict, from unworthy influences, strong religious principles, entire purity of life, and fervent patriotism — these are some of the characteristics of a man who, still under the age of forty,

has a wider personal popularity than any other living American. How strange it would be now, that a great party has named such a man for the highest office in the land, and has assumed his public principles as its policy, if he were not to be the choice of a majority of the people! How strange it is, that such a man should be the subject of gross misrepresentation and misconception! One hears, occasionally, from persons otherwise intelligent, an amount of prejudice concerning General McClellan, and a degree of credulity equal to the reception of the most monstrous fabrications, that are so astonishing that one is tempted to ask how such persons can have acquired such impressions or what their modes of forming their opinions can be. But the influence of party over the mind is too old a thing to need elucidation, and the arts by which the unscrupulous make use of that influence have not been invented for this particular era. It will be a good proof of our intelligence and virtue, as a people, if we shall now break that influence and defeat those arts.

Notwithstanding my great personal regard for General McClellan, I certainly would not vote for him, or urge others to do so, if I believed that there was the slightest danger of his proving, in the office of President, to be anything but the firm and independent man that I conceive him to be. In my opinion, there is no ground whatever for any apprehension on this point. I do not indeed think that his independence is of that quality that will lead him to disregard the counsels of the wise and the good; but I firmly believe that it is of a quality that will prevent the counsels of those who are not wise and good from ever approaching him. If any man labors to bring about Gen. McClellan's election in the expectation that he can thereby accomplish any selfish personal scheme, or any public plan or project that is not as comprehensive as the Union, and as beneficent as the Constitution itself, in my judgment he will make a great mis-

take. If any man shall refrain from voting for him in the belief that his administration will be influenced by any person or persons in whom the people of this country ought not to confide, such a man will also, I believe, greatly err.

I know how difficult it has been made for the American people to believe in public virtue. Private or personal virtue we can believe in. But our politics have been so degraded by tricks of deception, our politicians have so often compelled the people to distrust them, — that when a man, placed suddenly in a conspicuous and responsible position as a candidate for our suffrages, is called upon to declare his principles, one of our first impulses is to regard what he says, as a snare for our votes. This is a miserable habit, but it is not without its causes. All I can do to counteract it in this instance is, to tell you frankly what I think about General McClellan's letter accepting the nomination, and about the man who wrote it.

Be good enough, then, to remember one thing, that General McClellan, while he has the perceptions, qualities, and knowledge of a statesman, is not a politician. He has never been accustomed to practice the arts by which elections are carried, and I do not believe that he ever wrote a line in his life for mere political effect, or one that did not express his honest convictions. His letter accepting the nomination was written to give to the people of this country his ideas of the principles on which a national administration ought, in this crisis, to be constituted; and to state the principles on which it must be constituted by *him*, if he is to be the next President. That he will be likely, under any "pressure," to pursue any other course, or that he will ever be found to have said one thing and to do another, I have no shadow of apprehension.

Of course it was impossible for him to do anything more than to lay down the general principles that must guide

him, if he is placed in the high office to which he has been named. But if you will take that letter and examine it carefully and without prejudice, you will find that it states the only policy by which there can be any hope for a reunion of the whole people of this country under one flag and one government, — the flag and the government of the United States. It is very easy for this man or that to find a particular fault, or to pick a particular flaw in it; but if any man will take his pen in his hand and sit down to state a course of policy that can give peace to this country, and at the same time reestablish its government over the whole of its territory, he will find that if he varies essentially what is contained in that letter, he will have introduced or omitted something, the introduction or omission of which an enlightened and sound judgment must pronounce to be, in all human probability, absolutely fatal to any prospect of success. So at least, it has appeared to me. Knowing as I did, that when the nomination came, the answer to it would emanate directly from the mind of a man who had calmly surveyed the whole field of our national troubles, who has now been for some time removed from the immediate turmoil of public affairs, who has kept himself aloof from political entanglements, who has neither asked or desired political preferment, and who has at the same time watched from day to day and with a careful eye the military and the political aspects of this great civil war, I was prepared for a wise and well considered response. I was not disappointed. To me, under all the circumstances of the nomination, considering the various and conflicting views which our opponents attributed to the several parts of the great party which nominated him, — the firmness, the candor, and the precision of his answer stand as the surest guarantees of his own future course, and of that of the party whose leader he has become. If the American people cannot so re-

gard it, I know not where, or how we are to find the qualities that shall "give the world assurance of a MAN."

It is a remarkable evidence of General McClellan's intellectual powers, that he not only perceived, at the very first, the magnitude and character of the military struggle that was about to take place between the two great sections of this country, but that he comprehended the civil relations of the federal government to the people of the revolted States more accurately, and with a wider grasp, than most of our statesmen. That his views were so correct and so extensive, must be regarded, when we consider his age, as quite extraordinary. At the beginning of the war he was just five and thirty. Where else was there a man of that age in the United States whose opinions, respecting the character and relations of this great civil dissension, which had sundered an empire, would bear to be tested by the true theory of the institutions of the country? Between the opinion that there could be *no* coercion of the people of a revolted or seceded State, and the opinion that the federal government could throw off all the restraints of the Constitution and proceed to subjugation, there was certainly a middle ground of reason and of law. That ground General McClellan occupied from the first. Before the two houses of Congress had declared that ground in the resolution which the Republican Administration and its party afterwards so signally and fatally deserted, he applied it in all his military conduct in Western Virginia; and after he arrived in Washington, in August, 1861, and proceeded to form the Army of the Potomac, and to lay out a great campaign, the very first paper which he submitted to his official superiors, and all his orders and instructions to his subordinates, show what his conception was of the only lawful and constitutional theory on which the war could be waged by the government of the United States.

His view appears to have been this.

The government of the United States is a government of direct and sovereign powers, granted to it by solemn cession of the people of each State. It has therefore a right to put down all military or other forcible resistance to the exercise of its constitutional powers in any State. But it can have no right to acquire by force powers which have never been conferred upon it by the Constitution, and which cannot be exercised under the Constitution; and it can therefore never treat a State, or the people of a State, as if they had forfeited their right of self-government in those matters to which the Constitution of the United States does not extend. Taking this just and accurate view, he appears to have entertained the hope that after the Southern armies had been defeated, the people of the seceded States would find it most expedient to abandon their plan of a separate government and resume their constitutional obligations. But in order to aid this tendency, if such a tendency could be developed in the South, he saw very clearly that a humane, civilized, and just policy toward the people of those States was absolutely essential to success; and having been educated in the high principles with which modern civilization surrounds the exercise of war by Christian nations, and recognizing the fact that this contest had taken the proportions of a great war, he strove, in all that he did and all that he inculcated, to impress such a policy upon all its operations. Nay more, he strove to impress that policy upon the action of the government. It is all embodied, as you know very well, in the celebrated letter which he addressed to President Lincoln from Harrison's Bar.

When Mr. Lincoln received that letter he had in General McClellan an entirely disinterested and patriotic adviser. When the President made up his mind not to pursue such a policy as General McClellan recommended, but on the contrary to pursue a directly opposite course, forced upon him by what he himself described as the "pressure"

of a faction of his own party, he not only surrendered to the judgment of his contemporaries and of history the wisdom of his act, but by his subsequent conduct toward General McClellan he surrendered to the judgment of mankind his own character for magnanimity and justice. Whatever might be his opinion, or the opinion of others, respecting General McClellan's views on the conduct of the war, *he knew* that General McClellan had served him as the head of the government, and had served the country with perfect fidelity and honor, and that both President and people owed to that general a large debt of gratitude. Yet he has permitted General McClellan to be pursued by his partizans with an almost unparalleled malignity, when he might at any time have stopped the current of detraction. The power which a President of the United States can exercise over his party organs, and that portion of his followers who are most prone to attack the character of others by unscrupulous defamation, is as great as the power of any monarch over his courtiers; and when that power is not used to restrain and rebuke such defamation in the case of a man eminently conspicuous and important to the country, it is a just and proper inference that the power has not been exercised because he who holds it is willing that the injury should be done. Be the verdict of posterity, therefore, what it may, respecting the wisdom of Mr. Lincoln's rejection of General McClellan's policy, and his removal from command, it will be held hereafter as it must now be held by all unprejudiced minds that, as an impartial ruler and as a just man, Mr. Lincoln owed it to the country, to himself, and to the general who had so faithfully and truly served both, to protect that general's reputation from attacks which he knew to be malicious, and from imputations which he knew to be unfounded. This duty he has entirely failed to perform. Yet it was a duty plainly incumbent upon him, both as a man and as the executive head of this nation.

But I did not come here to discuss the personal relations of the two men who are now the representatives of two opposite parties, and on the election of one or the other of whom the weal or the woe of our country is, as I believe, to depend. I wish to state the issues, and to state them fairly, in an appeal to your reason and intelligence; and I wish if possible to clear those issues of all irrelevant matter. In this effort, my first duty is, to state the Democratic policy, as represented by the candidacy in which General McClellan stands before the country, according to my conception of his position. Of course, I look for that position where the country looks for it, in General McClellan's letter accepting the nomination.

I beg you not to think that it was merely out of regard to his own consistency that General McClellan made the answer which he did make to the Chicago nomination. Consistency is a very important thing to a man who has a great reputation at stake, and whose usefulness depends upon the preservation of the public respect for his steadiness of character and purpose. But there are duties incumbent upon a patriot which are at least as great as the duty of personal consistency, and one of those duties in addition to the duty of being consistent, General McClellan has performed most nobly on this occasion, and to my entire satisfaction as I hope it will prove to yours also.

All will agree, who are not ready to court vast public dangers, that the preservation of the Constitution of the United States is, or should be, the object of all our efforts. To me it appears very clearly that for both sections of the Union, for the South as well as for the North, the Constitution affords the only means by which we of the North can restore the Union, or by which they of the South can reënter it.

It cannot be doubted that the Constitution is in the greatest possible peril. On the one hand, it has been so wrenched out of its appropriate working and its true meanings by those who have for four years been charged with its adminis-

tration, that great numbers of men have been made to feel that instead of being the best it is the worst government on earth. On the other hand, there are those who, despairing of the attainment of peace under the forms of the Constitution, which they have seen perverted as they believe, into the means of prolonging the war, and promoting disunion have turned their thoughts to other methods, and have forecast in various modes of reconstruction, some new arrangement of our national existence, that would imply a new national government. Sectional ideas and interests, other than those which mark the distinctions between North and South, begin to intrude themselves among these discontents. Men in the West speculate upon its relations with the East and with the centre. Men in the central States look upon both sides of them, and are reflecting on the relative strength and importance of the ties which go eastward and westward. All are uneasy and anxious about the particular relation of their own or of some other section to the causes and differences which produced, or which still keep open, this great schism that has separated the South from the rest of the Union. Meanwhile, the burden of taxation is settling down upon the whole people with a terrible weight, and men begin to realize the magnitude of a public debt which they fear is already beyond the just resources of the country to pay, for which they can see no limitation ahead, and which is expressed in a fluctuating currency — the most demoralizing of all the financial conditions into which a nation can be thrown.

Every reflecting person will admit, then, that here is a state of things which imposes upon any man who has a part to play in public affairs a very stringent duty — the duty of defending and preserving that CONSTITUTION, which not only forms the existing bond that now holds us together as a people, but which affords the only possible means by which we can reach any improvements in our system without revolution and its

attendant risks of anarchy, as it is, in my judgment, the only means by which we can win back to the national fold the members who have gone astray from it.

These considerations, then, will be allowed by all reasonable men, as furnishing a sufficient ground for insisting that the just authority of the federal government shall be preserved, and that whatever modifications are hereafter to be made in our national system, they must be made according to the forms and method which the Constitution prescribes. I hold this to be a principle absolutely essential to the safety of our American institutions. I have lived through one scene of revolution, enacted, to be sure, on a small scale, and in a community in which I was interested only as a near neighbor, in which it was attempted to make a new government by substitution, without resorting to the sanction and consent of the existing government to the proposal of a change; and I never wish to see a repetition of that process. I allude, of course, to the case of Rhode Island and its civil war. I have, indeed, read elaborate discussions, in which a process of making a new Union outside of the methods of amendment, provided for by the Constitution, have been worked out on paper; but I have never seen one which was not marked by a fatal *hiatus* — that did not leave open a door through which anarchy would be almost certain to enter; or one that did not necessarily admit itself to be a revolution.

There is, therefore, in my opinion, a very important principle, as well as sound policy, involved in the position taken by General McClellan. That position is that the Southern States shall return to the Union; and that if they do so we will receive them and guarantee to them all the rights which the Constitution has ever secured to them. Is there anything unreasonable in this requirement, anything which will be likely to cause the people of the South to reject it when it shall be proposed to them by a great popular vote of the

North which shall remove the present administration from office? Let us see.

The people of the South must see, as well as we do, that when a popular government like that of the United States has been in operation for nearly eighty years, resting upon certain principles which have made a powerful nation out of a feeble confederacy, while it has a perfectly well-defined method of meeting all requirements of change, cannot be set aside with safety, for the purpose of making another system by mere substitution. They, as well as we, require for national safety a principle that is able to make a vigorous nationality strong enough to cope with any external enemy that the world can present to us; but we cannot preserve the power and attitude of a great nation, if we are to set aside that principle, and go into the formation of a new confederacy by agreement of the two sectional parts of that nation. The hazards are too great, and the people of both sections ought to see that it is neither necessary nor wise to incur those hazards. The Constitution we can amend, in its orderly and regular method, if it requires amendment, but we cannot set aside the principle of union which makes us a nation, and which is as essential to their welfare and safety as it is to ours.

These truths I expect to see the people of the South recognize, if we can furnish them with the evidence that we require nothing more of them than their return to the Union. The Democratic party, speaking through General McClellan, has done all that it can do, at present, to give this assurance. If the people of the North will sanction this policy by their votes, and the people of the South really desire peace and reunion, this long and bloody civil war can be brought to an honorable and successful termination. It is plain, however, that one of the first things to be done hereafter will be to ascertain if the people of the South desire to return to the Union, and to promote as well as we can, without compromising the authority of the Federal Government, any existing wishes of that kind.

The great misfortune of the case and what creates the chief difficulty, arises from the character and conduct of Mr. Lincoln's administration. It is an administration which does not appear to have had any course of action that could be dignified with the name of a policy. It has lived from hand to mouth on a series of expedients. No one connected with it has been able to hold out to the South a steady, consistent system based on a correct constitutional theory of the war, and leading to a simple and definite constitutional end. This is the reason why multitudes of men in the North have not been able to support Mr. Lincoln's prosecution of the war, and why there has been no Union party in the South. Measures lying wholly outside of the Constitution, or at least lying wholly within very debatable ground, have been resorted to *in terrorem* for the purpose of being used as auxiliary to the exercise of military force — such as the sweeping edicts of confiscation and emancipation, and the plans of the President for making constructive States within the domains of the States now claiming to be seceded from the Union. The consequence of all this has been to convince the people of the South that the triumph of the military power of the United States involves the loss of all their property, and the destruction of that principle of our system which makes every State the uncontrolled regulator of its domestic institutions. So much for the past. A new drama now opens.

Mr. Lincoln is a candidate for reelection; and we have under his own hand, since he became a candidate for reelection, a direct, authentic, and perfectly plain declaration of the conditions on which he will consent to receive the people of the South back into the Union. It is in these words:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, }
WASHINGTON July 18, 1864. }

To whom it may concern: —

Any proposition which embraces the restoration of peace, the integrity of the whole Union, and the abandonment of slavery, and

which comes by and with an authority that can control the armies now at war against the United States, will be received and considered by the Executive Government of the United States, and will be met by liberal terms on other substantial and collateral points, and the bearer or bearers thereof shall have safe conduct both ways.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

I have no right to impute to Mr. Lincoln purposes which he has not expressed, or reservations which he has not made. I have seen a great many ingenious explanations written by his political friends, to show how the President did *not* say that he would *not* receive and act upon other propositions which he did *not* mention. But I think if I were to read that paper to a jury of twelve intelligent men, who knew the subject to which it relates, and were to ask them to infer from it that Mr. Lincoln did not mean to make the abandonment of slavery *one of three conditions* on which he is willing to have a restoration of the Union, I should provoke a very significant smile. As plainly as the English language can speak, he couples together "the restoration of peace," "the integrity of the whole Union," and "the abandonment of slavery," as the three things which must be presented to him in one proposition, by the power that now controls the Southern armies. A proposition, he says, embracing these three things, will be met by the executive government of the United States—*how?* By liberal terms on those three points? Not at all; they will be met by liberal terms on "*other* substantial and *collateral* points." The language is carefully framed to exclude the idea that there can be any more liberality about the point of slavery than about the restoration of peace and the integrity of the Union. The one is as much a fixed purpose with Mr. Lincoln as the two others. He knows that both sections of the country have so understood him, and to this day he has never uttered a word to correct that impression. We are bound to believe that he does not wish to correct it.

Here then is a position which "goes a whole bar's length" beyond the res-

ervation to the supreme court of the question what *has become* of slavery in the progress of the war. Speaking in a paper addressed to every man on earth who can read English and has any concern in knowing his views, and dealing at the same time with the restoration of peace and the preservation of the integrity of the Union, Mr. Lincoln makes a positive requirement of the abandonment of slavery as an essential feature of any proposition on which he will treat. He did not mean to "palter in a double sense." He meant to be understood. He has been understood. The issue is made up between him and the Democratic party, on this point. If he changes that issue he comes over to us, so far as this matter is concerned. For, my friends, let it be observed that the Democratic party, speaking through General McClellan, its candidate, while it demands the restoration of peace and the integrity of the Union, has not made the condition of the abandonment of slavery essential either to peace or Union. There can be no mistake about General McClellan's position any more than about Mr. Lincoln's. We ask, says General McClellan, nothing but the Union. We, says Mr. Lincoln demand with the Union the abolition of slavery. You of the South, says the one, can come into the Union as you were before you left. You can come into the Union, says the other, but you must abandon slavery before your proposition to return can be considered.

Now let us inquire calmly, which of these courses of action is likely to give peace to this country; present and lasting peace. For the attainment of Mr. Lincoln's object, it is but rational to suppose that absolute and complete subjugation of the white race is essential. It is not within the limits of probability, that the people of the Southern States will *consent* to abolish slavery at our dictation, until the white race there is so reduced that its consent will be practically unimportant, and will therefore cease to be necessary. The consequence will be that you will have on your hands, for government, a country

as large as Europe, in which the whites will be unwilling, if they are able, and unable if they are willing, to coöperate in carrying on civil government. You must govern the country by the sword until you can introduce a new white population, and even then you must constantly interfere to settle the question as to which race is to be the predominant one. The result must be substantially a state of war for generations, or a reduction of vast portions of our country to a condition resembling that of other countries in which African slavery has been improvidently and summarily abolished. That we could make such a country pay the cost of governing it, no rational being can suppose; and that we ourselves can pay the taxes requisite, is just as far from being a rational conjecture.

Mr. Lincoln, I think, before he committed himself to such a course, should have considered where he was carrying the public credit of the United States. The financial scheme on which his administration has been managed has made the property of every man in this country, even that of the depositors in our savings banks, dependent for its value upon the safety and redemption of the public debt. If this war is to be conducted for the object propounded by Mr. Lincoln, that debt is absolutely illimitable, and must consequently become worthless, without any distinct act or acts of repudiation. If, on the other hand, we can have by a change of administration, a definite and constitutional end before us—if peace and reunion on the basis of the Constitution can be secured—the Democratic administration can address itself to the financial measures necessary to protect the public credit, by husbanding its resources, and by a vigorous application of economy to the public expenditures. That it will do so is morally certain, for no political party can, under any conceivable circumstances, assume the awful responsibility of ruining a nation and all its people by a voluntary repudiation.

If there is one thing of which the Democratic party has a right to boast, it is its management of the national credit. That credit has never been injured in Democratic hands, and for myself I do not believe that it ever will be, while the continued existence of the Union shall enable us to have any public credit all. But you can destroy the national credit by the same kind of process by which you can destroy the Union, and that is, by embarking in projects for which the Constitution affords you no warrant, and which open expenditures, compared to which all the present cost of this wasteful and extravagant war are as the drop which you can suspend from your finger to the illimitable ocean.

In every possible light in which it can be viewed, I deprecate this requirement which Mr. Lincoln has made a joint condition with the restoration of peace. It strikes at the principle which lies at the basis of the whole Union, and which denies to the federal power, as the representative of even a majority of the people of the United States, the right to dictate local laws and institutions. There are other communities besides those which hold slaves, that are jealous of their rights of local self-government. And, therefore, thankful as I should be if slavery could be abolished by the consent of those whose affair it is, and who can alone deal with the negro wisely and beneficially for him and themselves, I am unwilling to purchase its abolition by putting at hazard that important principle of local self-government. I do not wish to see what remains of the Union subjected to any further strains. I frankly confess my fears of the effect of such consolidation, and just as frankly I avow my belief that its effect on the stability of the Union will be most pernicious. We are a people more singularly situated than any other people have ever been, who have reached a commanding height of national greatness with republican forms of government. By a most happy thought, our fathers devised a means of constituting a nation out of separate

republics, by uniting their inhabitants for certain purposes of government, leaving them for all other purposes independent of each other. What front against the outer world this principle of Union has enabled us to present, I need not remind you. But have you ever reflected upon what it is that preserves constitutional liberty, in our internal condition; what it is that stands as a barrier against the mere physical force of this nation, and protects the rights of minorities and sections from being crushed beneath the same power that can make itself so formidable to the external world? Beyond all question, it is the States, with their separate political rights, their local institutions, their admitted control over their own domestic affairs. Break down these barriers, and one of two consequences must inevitably ensue; we shall either resolve ourselves into a completely consolidated nation, which must of necessity take the form and wield the powers of a despotism, or we shall take refuge against that destruction of our civil liberties, in the formation of sectional confederacies.

Now, whether this result is, or is not to come about, depends in my opinion, upon the clearness with which the people of the United States shall see, and the firmness with which they shall act upon, the requirements of the problem of the restoration of the Union between the North and the South. If, disregarding the principles of the Constitution, and exercising the powers of military conquerors, we demand as conditions of peace things inconsistent with the acknowledged basis of the Union, we shall, if we succeed in extorting those conditions, overthrow the principle that makes Republican institutions possible in so great a country; and then, to avert the final loss of such institutions, we shall in turn destroy the principle that gives us nationality, and disappear from our position among the leading powers of the world. The intrigues that have been and will be set on foot, by foreign influences, to hasten

this catastrophe, you can appreciate as well as I can describe them. If, on the other hand, we are wise enough to perceive and follow the safer path, we have a most powerful lever with which to work, in that principle of human nature which the creator of all has implanted in all, and which opens or shuts the reason of mankind according as pride is wounded or is saved. I know how much the sectional passions have been aroused. I know that the people of the North must rise to a great height of magnanimity. But after all, when our own interest dictates the very thing that magnanimity demands, does it require a very great moral effort to reach that temper of mind, which will enable us to see how we can relieve the pride of an adversary and convert him into a friend. This is often the only needful stroke in human affairs, and it is a process of wonderful simplicity and efficacy even in the most embittered controversies.

There can be no question, as it seems to me, that this administration of Mr. Lincoln stands to-day as a barrier against the reunion of the South and the North. Believing this to be true, I have, as a citizen of the United States, a duty to perform in endeavoring to effect a change. I am bound not to yield to Mr. Lincoln's personal demand for reelection, when I am convinced that he has made his removal from office necessary. That he himself has made this so, is but too apparent from the exaction which he has coupled with the restoration of peace.

Here, then, is exactly where we of the Democratic party stand. We propose no compromise whatever of the authority of the federal government. Our candidate has made this absolutely plain. But we do not admit that Mr. Lincoln has any claim to be for four years longer identified in person with the authority of the government, when we believe that we could have peace if that authority were lodged in the hands of a man who will not make

the condition of peace which Mr. Lincoln exacts. We wish to be rid of that condition which we believe enlists the pride of the South against the authority of the government, and by relieving that pride to save that authority.

This is the simple truth of our position, reduced to an exact issue. But the monstrous claim has been put forward, that Mr. Lincoln, constitutionally elected in 1860, was entitled to rule over the whole United States; and that, as the secession of the Southern States has prevented his so ruling for the first term, it will in some way derogate from the just authority of the government if Mr. Lincoln is not elected for the second term. I wish to have a word or two to say on this claim, to my Republican friends,—to my old *Whig* friends,—whose votes assisted to put into office the author of the rescript “to whom it may concern.” I ask you to analyze this strange doctrine,—what there is of it,—and to put it home to your consciences and your intelligence. You and I once belonged to the same political organization, the noble old *Whig* party of the Union. *You* thought that the Republican party could be put into power without endangering the political institutions of this country. *I* thought otherwise; and so we separated. But wherever we went, we could not unlearn the teachings of the great masters of our political faith. In that school in which we were trained in long years of political success or political adversity, if we learned anything which it became us as American citizens to know, we learned that the elective franchise is to be used, not for the benefit of presidents or secretaries, but for the welfare of our country; and that, when an incumbent of office represents a policy injurious to the country, *he* is to be sacrificed, and the *office* is to be saved, that it may answer the ends of its creation. So plain is this principle of political ethics that it astonishes me to hear any man who ever bore the name of “*Whig*” advance a fictitious identity

between the incumbent and the office, when the question is on the policy which that incumbent pursues.

Why the very name which we wore so long and with so much glory, and which goes back to an era of the grandest memory, puts to shame this slavish doctrine. The English Whigs of 1688 broke the succession to the British throne, because the continuance of the incumbent was incompatible with the public welfare, and made him and his posterity wanderers on the face of the earth until their whole line was extinct. And are we, the American Whigs of the nineteenth century, to act upon a doctrine that would have kept the Stuarts on the throne, because, forsooth, the law gave them a right to expect to reign indefinitely? The *Whig* doctrine was that the law gave them a right to reign so long as they were fit to reign. I do not mean to admit that our American franchise is to be exercised on any lower principle, especially when its sole effect on the incumbent will be to retire him to private life, to live like the rest of us under the protection of the Constitution and the laws.

Consider, for one moment, where this doctrine, which has been advanced for Mr. Lincoln, inevitably leads you. You yield to this pretension of a personal claim to reelection, because there has been a rebellion against the authority which, for the time, resided in his person, and you drop your ballot into the box in his favor, when that ballot, deposited for any other man, just as effectually asserts and protects the authority of the office. You thus debar yourself by a fiction from all opposition to any official acts or measures of Mr. Lincoln's administration, and your vote counts in the grand total of sanction which the result, if it is in his favor, will afford to his entire course. You thus forego all your opinions, whatever they may be, on the financial scheme which has given us an inconvertible paper-currency, and unsettled all the legal and moral basis of all pecuniary relations; on the violent

assumptions of an executive authority to seize and imprison citizens without process of law, and in places where no military operations exist; on the suppression of the freedom of speech and of the press; on the interference of military power with the rights of the ballot; on whatever act or principle, or policy, of this administration ought to be passed in review by American citizens, through the only lawful and peaceable means by which such wrongs can be corrected. You will never have another opportunity to express your opinions upon these measures than the one that is now before you; for if Mr. Lincoln is reëlected, the sanction of the American people will have been deliberately placed upon his official acts, and the Constitution will have received at the hands of the people their authoritative support for all the constructions and interpretations which he and his followers and his ministers have undertaken to affix to it. These consequences will manifestly follow, if you adopt and act upon the claim for reëlection that is put forward for Mr. Lincoln on the ground of his personal identification with the authority of the office.

All other claims that can be advanced for him are, I admit, questions of public policy, and are therefore fit to be considered. They resolve themselves into the single question of his capacity to restore the Union. On this question, it seems to me there can be but one judgment passed by intelligent men. He and his supporters put themselves upon this issue, namely: They regard no union as of any value, which is to embrace any slave-holding States. They must therefore either force the Southern States, by war, to extinguish slavery, or, failing in that, they must make a country which will exclude all slave-holding communities. A distinguished Massachusetts senator (Mr. Sumner) has recently expressed the attitude of Mr. Lincoln very forcibly, in these words:

The President was clearly right when, in a recent letter, he declared that he should accept

no terms of peace which did not begin with the abandonment of slavery. ("Good," and cheers.) The Union cannot live with slavery. Nothing can be clearer than this. If slavery dies the Union lives; if slavery lives the Union dies.

Mr. Greeley, too, is equally explicit; for, standing at the head of the Lincoln electoral ticket in the State of New York, he declares

There is but one obstacle to the American Union to-day, and that is slavery; there is but one peril to the American Union, and that is slavery. We have resolved to put down slavery and restore the Union. (Cheers.) *On that platform we stand.*

Thus the conditions of mortality for the Union appear to be fixed. Still let us hope that before the final doom is pronounced, the people of this country may have a voice to utter. But it must be uttered now or never. When Mr. Lincoln has been reëlected, the *fiat* will have gone forth. He will never be able to retrace his steps; he will never disenthral himself from the control of those who have pushed him on to the point where he must make the success or failure of his arms turn upon his power to force the abolition of slavery. The motto of his next administration has been composed. "If slavery dies, the Union lives; if slavery lives, the Union dies." And as all is to be cast upon this single die,—as all our hopes of rebuilding the Union of our fathers are to depend upon this one issue, and as that issue involves a preordained consequence and a declared purpose, it is written so that he who runs may read, that the independence of the Southern Confederacy is to be yielded, if we cannot by arms extort the abandonment of slavery. What hope or expectation the supporters of Mr. Lincoln can have of the holding together of the West and East after such a result has been reached, I am unable to conceive. For myself, so long as there remains any Constitution of the United States to cling to—that instrument to which I have many times sworn fealty—I shall remember and keep my vows. I am a citizen of the United States, bound to the Constitution of my coun-

try while it lives. But I cannot shut my eyes to the manifest future. I believe that the Constitution will *not* live under the experiment of a Northern United States; and with that Constitution goes all hope of Republican self-government for this country.

There are undoubtedly among those who have hitherto acted with the Republican party, many who are now disposed to pause and reflect. I implore them to consider whither we are tending. In former years, my voice against the voices of others, was raised against your organization, your policy, and your candidates, and fell unheeded. Let all that pass away. I ask no credit to myself or to others for any predictions we may have uttered. I shall ask none hereafter in any event. I only beseech you *now*, now, in the accepted present, in the day of salvation, ere the present has become the future, and we are all alike involved in what that future is to bring — to give to your country your calmest thoughts and your utmost wisdom. Give heed to the counsels of one who has perilled life and reputation on the field of battle in defence of your Union, and who now tells you how it may still be saved, in thoughts and accents that must have struck a resounding chord in your hearts. He has never asked for your suffrages; he wants no place, or power, or dignity. His character seems to have formed itself into one of great strength and moral beauty, by the operation of events upon a pure and patriotic nature. The love of country, impressed upon him when you, oh! city of Philadelphia, gave him in his boyhood to the institution which received him for the Union and trained him to revere its flag — the love of country has been his ruling principle, next to the fear of God. But mark how that love of country has been tempered and enlarged by the great transactions in which he has borne his part. No narrow view of the exigencies of the times has cramped his intellect, no personal wrongs have soured him, no injustice has driv-

en him from his own equipoise, no temptation has led him into the devious ways of the demagogue, no sophistries of his own or of others' coinage have distorted his perceptions of the true principles of our government. He stands to-day in the vigor of life, in military skill, in solidity of character, in varied accomplishments, in wise and sound intellectual habits, and in firmness of principle, the foremost man of his generation in this country; and whatever may be the result of this pending and momentous canvass, his importance to the future welfare of our America will be more and more acknowledged, as such virtues and such capacities become more and more essential to the safety and defence of social order under republican institutions and laws.

As you have done me the honor to ask for my opinions on the issues involved in the approaching election, I close with a recapitulation of what I have said. I believe

First. That this war must be brought speedily to a close, or this country and its inhabitants will be financially ruined. It is impossible *now*, to do more than pay the interest on the accrued debt, if any provision whatever is to be made for a sinking fund to meet the principal.

Second. That the Lincoln policy of war for the extinction of slavery is a policy for an illimitable debt, because it is a policy for a perpetual standing army of vast proportions; and if adopted, that it must render our public obligations and securities worthless, entail pecuniary ruin alike upon government and people, and overthrow the Constitution.

Third. That the McClellan policy of receiving the Southern States back to their places in the Union as they were before they left it, is the only policy that affords the slightest prospect of peace and reunion, with the Constitution preserved, our nationality saved, and the public credit rescued from destruction.

HENRY CLAY.

EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH OF THE HON. HENRY CLAY, IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, ON THE SUBJECT OF ABOLITION PETITIONS, FEBRUARY 7, 1839.

"SIR,—I am not in the habit of speaking lightly of the possibility of dissolving this happy Union. The Senate knows that I have deprecated allusions, on ordinary occasions, to that direful event. The country will testify, that, if there be anything in the history of my public career worthy of recollection, it is the truth and sincerity of my ardent devotion to its lasting preservation. But we should be false in our allegiance to it if we did not discriminate between the imaginary and the real dangers by which it may be assisted. Abolition should no longer be regarded as an imaginary danger. The Abolitionists, let me suppose, succeed in their present aims of uniting the inhabitants of the Free States as one man, against the inhabitants of the Slave States. Union on the one side will beget union on the other. And this process of reciprocal consolidation will be attended with all the violent prejudices, embittered passions, and implacable animosities which ever degraded or deformed human nature. A virtual dissolution of the Union will have already taken place, whilst the form of its existence remains. The most valuable element of union, mutual kindness, the feelings of sympathy, the fraternal bonds, which now happily unite us, will have been extinguished forever. One section will stand in menacing and hostile array against the other. The collision of opinion will be quickly followed by the clash of arms. I will not attempt to describe scenes which now lie happily concealed from our view. Abolitionists themselves would shrink back in dismay and horror at the contemplation of desolated fields, conflagrated cities, murdered inhabitants, and the overthrow of the fairest fabric of human government that ever rose to animate the hopes of civilized man. Nor should these Abolitionists flatter themselves, that, if they can succeed in their object of uniting the Free States, they will enter the contest with a numerical superiority that must insure victory. All history and experience proves the hazard and uncer-

tainty of war; and we are admonished by Holy Writ, "that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." But if they were to conquer, whom would they conquer? A foreign foe? one that had invaded our shores, insulted our flag, and laid our country waste? No, sir; no, sir. It would be a contest without laurels, without glory, — a self, a suicidal conquest, — a conquest of brothers over brothers, — achieved by one over another portion of the descendants of common ancestors, who, nobly pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, had fought and bled, side by side, in many a hard battle on land and ocean, severed our country from the British crown, and established our national independence.

The inhabitants of the Slave States are sometimes accused by their Northern brethren with displaying too much rashness and sensibility to the operations and proceedings of Abolitionists. But, before they can be rightly judged, there should be a reversal of conditions. Let me suppose that the people of the Slave States were to form societies, subsidize presses, make large pecuniary contributions, send forth numerous missionaries throughout all their own borders, and enter into machinations to burn the beautiful capitals, destroy the productive manufactories, and sink into the ocean the gallant ships of the Northern States. Would these incendiary proceedings be regarded as neighborly, and friendly, and consistent with the fraternal sentiments which should ever be cherished by one portion of the Union towards another? Would they excite no emotion, occasion no manifestations of dissatisfaction, nor lead to any acts of retaliatory violence? But the supposed case falls far short of the actual one, in a most essential circumstance. In no contingency could these capitals, manufactories, and ships rise in rebellion and massacre inhabitants of the Northern States.

"I am, Mr. President, no friend of slavery. The Searcher of all hearts

knows that every pulsation of mine beats high and strong in the cause of civil liberty. Whenever it is safe and practicable I desire to see every portion of the human family in the enjoyment of it. But I prefer the liberty of my own country to that of any other people; and the liberty of my own race to that of any other race. The liberty of the descendants of Africa in the United States is incompatible with the safety and liberty of the European descend-

ants. Their slavery forms an exception — an exception resulting from a stern and inexorable necessity — to the general liberty in the United States. We did not originate, nor are we responsible for, this necessity. Their liberty, if it were possible, could only be established by violating the incontestable powers of the States, and subverting the Union. And beneath the ruins of the Union would be buried, sooner or later, the liberty of both races."

GENERAL McCLELLAN'S LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE.

ORANGE, NEW JERSEY, }
September 8, 1864. }

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter informing me of my nomination by the Democratic National Convention, recently assembled at Chicago, as their candidate at the next election for President of the United States.

It is unnecessary for me to say to you that this nomination comes to me unsought.

I am happy to know that when the nomination was made the record of my public life was kept in view.

The effect of long and varied service in the army during war and peace, has been to strengthen and make indelible in my mind and heart the love and reverence for the Union, Constitution, laws, and flag of our country, impressed upon me in early youth.

These feelings have thus far guided the course of my life, and must continue to do so to its end.

The existence of more than one government over the region which once owned our flag is incompatible with the peace, the power, and the happiness of the people.

The preservation of our Union was the sole avowed object for which the war was commenced. It should have been conducted for that object only, and in accordance with those principles which I took occasion to declare when in active service.

Thus conducted, the work of reconciliation would have been easy, and we might have reaped the benefits of our many victories on land and sea.

The Union was originally formed by the exercise of a spirit of conciliation and compromise. To restore and preserve it, the same spirit must prevail in our councils, and in the hearts of the people.

The reëstablishment of the Union in all its integrity is, and must continue to be, the indispensable condition in any settlement. So soon as it is clear, or even probable, that our present adversaries are ready for peace, upon the basis of the Union, we should exhaust all the resources of statesmanship practised by civilized nations, and taught by the traditions of the American people, consistent with the honor and interests of the country, to secure such peace, reëstablish the Union, and guarantee for the future the constitutional rights of every State. The Union is the one condition of peace—we ask no more.

Let me add what, I doubt not was, although unexpressed, the sentiment of the Convention, as it is of the people they represent, that when any one State is willing to return to the Union, it should be received at once, with a full guarantee of all its constitutional rights.

If a frank, earnest, and persistent effort to obtain those objects should fail, the responsibility for ulterior consequences will fall upon those who remain in arms against the Union. But the Union must be preserved at all hazards.

I could not look in the face of my gallant comrades of the army and navy, who have survived so many bloody battles, and tell them that their labors and the sacrifice of so many of our slain and wounded brethren

ren had been in vain; that we had abandoned that Union for which we have so often periled our lives.

A vast majority of our people, whether in the army and navy or at home, would, as I would, hail with unbounded joy the permanent restoration of peace, on the basis of the Union under the Constitution, without the effusion of another drop of blood. But no peace can be permanent without Union.

As to the other subjects presented in the resolutions of the Convention, I need only say that I should seek, in the Constitution of the United States and the laws framed in accordance therewith, the rule of my duty, and the limitations of executive power; endeavor to restore economy in public expenditure, reestablish the supremacy of law, and, by the operation of a more vigorous nationality, resume our commanding position among the nations of the earth.

The condition of our finances, the depreciation of the paper money, and the burdens thereby imposed on labor and capital, show the necessity of a return to a

sound financial system; while the rights of citizens, and the rights of States, and the binding authority of law over President, army, and people, are subjects of not less vital importance in war than in peace.

Believing that the views here expressed are those of the Convention and the people you represent, I accept the nomination.

I realize the weight of the responsibility to be borne should the people ratify your choice.

Conscious of my own weakness, I can only seek fervently the guidance of the Ruler of the universe, and, relying on His all-powerful aid, do my best to restore union and peace to a suffering people, and to establish and guard their liberties and rights,

I am, gentlemen,
very respectfully,
your obedient servant,

GEO. B. McCLELLAN.

Hon. HORATIO SEYMOUR,
and others, Committee.

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REPUBLICAN PLATFORM

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
WASHINGTON, July 18, 1864. }

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Any proposition which embraces the restoration of peace, the integrity of the whole Union, and the abandonment of slavery, and which comes by and with an authority that can control the armies now

at war against the United States, will be received and considered by the Executive Government of the United States, and will be met by liberal terms on other substantial and collateral points, and the bearer or bearers thereof shall have safe conduct both ways.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

WATCHWORDS FOR PATRIOTS.

Mottoes for the Campaign, selected from General McClellan's Writings.

If it is not deemed best to intrust me with the command even of my own army, I simply ask to be permitted to share their fate on the field of battle. — *Despatch to General Halleck, August 30, 1862.*

By pursuing the political course I have always advised, it is possible to bring about a permanent restoration of the Union—a re-union by which the rights of both sections shall be preserved, and by which both parties shall preserve their self-respect, while they respect each other. — *General McClellan's Report.*

I am devoutly grateful to God that my last campaign was crowned with a victory which saved the nation from the greatest peril it had then undergone. — *General McClellan's Report.*

At such a time as this, and in such a struggle, political partisanship should be merged in a true and brave patriotism, which thinks only of the good of the whole country. — *General McClellan's West Point Oration.*

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